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THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES

In following the development of Professor James's intellectual interests away from the problems of the body, through the problems of the mind, to the deeper problems of the soul and the broader problems of the universe, we find that his work covered successively three general fields of thought—psychology, religion, and pure philosophy—in each of which he was in turn prominent. His psychological period may be said briefly to cover the years from 1880 to 1900, his philosophical period the remaining decade from 1900 to 1910; the former being made especially notable by the publication of his *Principles of Psychology* in its median year—1890—the latter being marked by the publication of various monographs, lectures, and collected works on pragmatism and allied doctrines. His studies in religion are transitional, the interest being partly psychological and partly philosophical, and culminate in what is perhaps the most widely interesting of all his books—*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, published in 1902. These three periods with their respective problems we shall review in order.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

It will be unnecessary for us here to touch upon James's treatment of the ordinary problems of scientific psychology—as of the emotions, and the relational elements in consciousness—but his theory of the self, and his investigations in the field of psychological research must be of considerable interest to us.

The Theory of the Self

All religions agree that man has an immortal soul—i. e., a permanent and indestructible self, underlying and expressing itself in the various transitory sensations and ideas and emotions which go to make up what we call our minds. James, however, insists that introspection gives no evidence of such a soul, and does not require us to postulate it in order to explain the phenomena of our ordinary experience. As he conceives it, the

transcendental self or "I" is merely the consciousness of the present or any single moment, regarded as including in itself the recollection of previous moments.

Now this theory is undoubtedly an anti-religious one, but the difficulty with the ordinary view of the soul which led Professor James, and has led and is now leading many others, to reinterpret the concept of the self in phenomenalist terms, is really a serious difficulty and not one constructed *ad hoc*. It lies, however, not in the idea of a permanent self as such, as opponents of that idea seem to think, but in the common meaning given to that idea, which persists notwithstanding repeated attempts to overthrow it—namely, the interpretation of selfhood in terms of substance. Popular religion and philosophy always conceive of the soul as a kind of substance—immaterial, it is true, but so like matter in its attributes that it is hard to distinguish between them—dwelling within, and freely interacting with, the body. Now as a matter of fact, of course, this concept of substance is totally inapplicable to the soul, and so long as religion thinks of the soul in substantial terms, just so long will it be difficult to reconcile the idea of a permanent self with the modern philosophical view of things: so soon, however, as religion shows itself willing to sacrifice the superficially simple but irrational substantialist view, with its material and quasi-material implications, and substitute for it the teleological view, just so soon will the difficulty pointed out by phenomenalist criticism disappear.

This teleological concept of the self, in brief, is that the soul or personality is not a substance but a Value, Meaning, or Purpose in the universe. Personality is never a substance, for substance can never be anything more than a thing. The self of scientific psychology is a mere complex of shifting states, and this description covers the whole reality of the self as a phenomenon or fact of experience: so far James is right—*introspection* gives no evidence of a permanent self. But in addition to being a *fact* or phenomenon, the self is also a *value*, and it is this aspect of the one self that we denote by the word 'soul'. Phenomenalism asserts that the self is merely a phenomenon, that the scientific attitude toward it is the only possible attitude: substantialism

and transcendentalism agree that the scientific account of the self is inadequate; but whereas substantialism places the unity and permanence of the self in a soul which is distinguished from and added to the mind of psychology, transcendentalism admits that so far as the soul is a *fact*, the scientific account is sufficient, but that the soul is more than a fact—viz., a *Value*—and furthermore that on this side rather than the other consists its most essential reality.

Problems of Psychical Research

But metaphysical psychology is a technical discipline, and its problems are not generally of much interest except to the professional philosopher or psychologist. The "plain man" either believes that he has a soul, without caring very much what its metaphysical nature may be, or else disbelieves in the existence of the soul altogether. Psychical research, however, constitutes a field of investigation which is of almost universal interest, and it is in this field undoubtedly that Professor James attained his highest eminence.

His own conclusions as to the most important problem of psychical research—that of alleged communications from the departed—after a lifetime of interested study, are recorded in an article in *The American Magazine* for October, 1902. In this article he admits himself "baffled as to spirit-return, and as to many other spiritual problems," and acknowledges the unfortunate prominence of what he calls "bosh" and "humbug" in the various investigations and reports, but insists nevertheless on the "presence in the midst of all the humbug, of really supernatural knowledge." "I personally," he says, "am as yet neither a convinced believer in parasitic demons, nor a spiritist, nor a scientist, but still remain a psychical researcher waiting for more facts before concluding." He suggests, however, as a possible explanation, that there may be "an interaction between slumbering faculties in the automatist's mind and a cosmic environment of other consciousness of some sort which is able to work on them." This would account for both telepathic and spiritistic communications, but a large portion of the latter might come, not from the *disembodied* spirits of the departed, but from

undeveloped spirits which have never yet attained embodiment. Thus, as he goes on to say, "if there were in the universe a lot of diffuse soul-stuff, unable of itself to get into consistent personal form, or to take permanent possession of an organism, yet always craving to do so, it might get its head into the air parasitically, so to speak, by profiting by weak spots in the armor of human minds, and slipping in and stirring up there the sleeping tendency to personate."

As to the religious significance of all this, it is undoubtedly true that the attitude of most Christians to-day toward the entire matter of spirit-communication is decidedly antagonistic. Objection is offered both to the content of the alleged messages, and to the very idea that spirits which have passed out of this life into the higher plane of the after-life should return again to our lower earth-plane. In opposition to the spiritistic hypothesis it is held by many religious men that these communications which are not fraudulent, and cannot be explained on the ground of telepathy between living minds, must be ascribed to the agency of evil spirits. That, of course, is a possible explanation of many of the phenomena, but there is not yet sufficient evidence to justify us in asserting it positively, certainly not universally. Furthermore, if we keep in mind the accepted fact that all really *evidential* "messages" come from the alleged spirits of those who have but lately departed from the body, the only real objection to the spiritistic hypothesis from the religious point of view disappears, for this fact only corroborates the prevalent doctrine that the development of the human soul out of the present earth-plane up to the final heavenly one is not instantaneous but gradual.

Spiritism makes two assertions: (1) that human personality survives the death of the body, and (2) that there are channels open through which the departed can communicate with those they have left behind. The former of these assertions at least is universally accepted throughout the entire religious world, and the latter also is of very wide acceptance. The Apostles' Creed asserts a belief in the life after death and in the communion of all holy souls, but contains no statement as to the nature of the other world or the method of communication with its denizens.

Certainly, even if mediumistic communication *is* possible, it is in any case abnormal, not to say pathological; for the normal mode of communication between a pure spirit and an embodied one must, it would seem, be purely spiritual rather than material, since it is the spiritual nature only which the living and the departed hold in common. The *possibility* of the abnormal mediumistic method of communication remains nevertheless, I should insist, a scientific rather than a religious problem, and the *direct* religious significance of the work of Professor James and others in that field is therefore absolutely *nil*. Belief in the communion of saints and the life everlasting rests on grounds totally independent of what the solution of these psychical research problems may be, and these problems should be to the religious man, except so far as he may have a genuinely scientific interest in them, a matter of total indifference. That the *indirect* religious influence upon an unbalanced mind of "dabbling in spiritism" may, on the other hand, be decidedly bad cannot be gainsaid, but the same thing may be said of almost any scientific or philosophical problem in its effect upon a mind whose religious foundations are insecure.

II. RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS

Immortality

Psychical research approaches the problem of immortality from the scientific side: in his Ingersoll lecture Professor James attacked the same problem from the philosophical standpoint. This lecture will, therefore, be of service to us in passing from a discussion of its author's psychical investigations to that of his distinctively religious theories.

In this lecture, replying to the so-called physiological objection that thought is a function of the brain, and that mental life must therefore be entirely dependent even for its very existence upon the good working condition of our cerebral hemispheres, and so cannot survive the death of the body, James points out that, even if we admit the premise, it does not follow necessarily that the brain actually creates or engenders thought as a machine does energy, so that the very existence and life of the soul are dependent on it; on the contrary, thought may have an

existence and origin quite independent of the brain, and the brain itself may have merely the function of transmitting thought—a function which it performs well or badly according as it is in good or bad working order, or so far as it offers slight or serious resistance to the activities of thought. According to this transmission theory, insanity would not be a morbid condition of the mind itself, but a morbid *manifestation* of mind due to an obstructed passage of thought through the brain; and death would not involve the destruction of the mind, but merely the destruction of one—not necessarily the only—channel of mental activity. These suggestions are of course purely speculative, but they harmonize well with their author's theory of spirit-communication above stated, and also with his general theory of the psychological basis of religion which we are about to consider.

Religion and Religious Experience

James's philosophy of religion is contained chiefly in two of his writings—the essay on *The Will to Believe*, and the Gifford lectures entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. No other single work from his pen has had, I suppose, such a wide and thoroughly valuable influence upon thoughtful men as the former of these, and the latter is undoubtedly his most popular book.

The leading idea of the earlier essay is that whenever an option or choice is offered us between two hypotheses—as of the existence of God—some decision between them being of vital importance to the individual, but the intellectual grounds for decision either way being insufficient, then we have not only the right but the duty to adopt the alternative which best satisfies our emotional and practical needs; and furthermore, that we cannot simply suspend judgment, since a refusal to decide is itself a practical decision—to refuse to assert that God exists is to act as if He did not exist. What James contends for is, therefore, (1) the necessity of deciding for or against the reality of religion because it is *practically* impossible to suspend judgment on such an important matter, and (2) the practical and emotional value of decision in favor of the truth of religion

rather than against it. For this insistence on the practical nature and necessity of religious faith contemporary religious philosophy owes William James a lasting debt of gratitude.

The Gifford lectures are concerned, as their title would indicate, chiefly with the psychology rather than the philosophy of religion—with a study of the mental phenomena accompanying religious experience—a subject which is of direct psychological interest, but of only very indirect religious significance. An interesting psychological theory as to the nature of religion itself and of the religious consciousness, which has had considerable influence upon later writers, is, however, propounded in the course of the work.

On the objective side this theory is that religion consists essentially in two assertions: (1) that "there is something wrong with us as we naturally stand," and (2) "that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connections with the higher powers"—a connection which is possible because of the fact that man's higher nature "is conterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck. In the psychological application of this theory James affirms that the subconscious self is the intermediary between the conscious self and God. "Whatever it may be on its *farther* side," he says "the 'more' with which in our religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life." That is to say, man in his higher nature is continuous with the rest of the universe in *its* inner nature: whatever God may be in Himself (whatever the "More" may be on its "farther side"), He is in his relation to man (the "More" on its "hither side") continuous with our higher nature—or, better, man and God are not distinct personalities who come into relationship from outside, but man in his subconsciousness is a member of a continuum which includes also all other souls and God.

Now, considering the hesitation which many of the most competent psychologists of to-day manifest in accepting the idea of

subconscious mentation at all, it would seem hardly safe to base a theory of religion upon such an insecure foundation; but even if we accept that theory, we must remember that the consciousness and subconsciousness of any one individual are certainly not distinct 'selves', and do undoubtedly form together a continuum, whether or not the subconsciousnesses of all individuals forms a continuum with one another and with God, as the philosophy of the *Varieties* teaches. This being the case, all James's theory can positively mean is that the religious consciousness is an unreasoned intuitive one, a matter of feeling rather than of argument, and that God makes himself known to man ordinarily in vague and hidden rather than in definite ways—not that the religious life belongs to any one *part* of the mind to the exclusion of any other. The religious consciousness, unlike our ordinary rationalizing consciousness, which always takes a more or less detached attitude toward its object, regards itself and its object—man and God—as akin or capable of intercommunion—though not, as James's philosophy would require, as actually continuous. Finally, it will dampen considerably our enthusiasm for this theory if we remember that the subconscious, if it exists at all, is as much the 'seat' of the lower physiological activities as of the higher spiritual ones, and is as responsible for the most vicious and diabolic promptings of our nature as for the most virtuous and godlike ones.

Metaphysical Implications of the Gifford Lectures

James's view is probably as near to pantheism as it is possible to get without actually becoming such: man is not regarded as a part of God as the pantheist teaches that he is, but neither are man and God distinct personalities as theism insists, but rather continuous parts of the same universe which is broader than either. There is between this philosophy of the Gifford lectures of 1901-2, and the later philosophy of the Hibbert lectures of 1909 to be referred to after a while—between James the psychical researcher and philosopher of religion, and James the empirical psychologist and metaphysician—a contradiction so great as to be startling, but one which is very significant of what I think must be confessed to be the superficiality or any plural-

istic metaphysic. James's Gifford philosophy, if I may so call it, fits in well with the doctrine of spirit-communication, and his Hibbert philosophy with the demands of the pragmatic method, but the two philosophies do not bear each other out in any point.

In his *American Magazine* article, it will be remembered, James suggests that there may be in the universe a "lot of diffuse soul-stuff," or undeveloped spirit-substance (our old friend the "substantial soul" in a new guise) which have not attained individuality and permanent embodiment in human organisms, but which are able to manifest themselves under certain conditions temporarily through any "weak spots" which may present themselves in the "armor of human minds." Assimilating this suggestion with various other theories of Professor James which we have already considered, and summarizing, we may attempt a formulation of the "Gifford philosophy" somewhat as follows: (1) the universe as a whole is in its essential reality a continuum, not a complex of discrete elements; (2) individuation, or the differentiation of separate individuals out of this continuum, and distinctive divine and human personality, are afterthoughts in the development of the universe; (3) man is distinct from God only so far as he is actively conscious—subconsciously he is continuous with the Divine Being; (4) birth, or at least the development of conscious personality is a process whereby what is at first merely "diffuse soul-stuff" becomes a distinctive human being through embodiment in some properly endowed physiological organism; (5) religious experience consists in a temporary sinking back of the conscious personality into the subconscious sea from which it sprang; (6) death is merely a permanent sinking back into this continuum, the physiological organism ceasing to individualize the soul, and the crude condition of the human brain ceasing to obstruct the transmission of thought between the various parts of the universe.

These six propositions sum up the philosophy of the *Varieties*, of the Ingersoll lecture, and of the author's conclusions in the matter of psychical research, and seem to possess a certain coherence and systematic unity among themselves. Later we shall take occasion to summarize in similar fashion the scheme of

things set forth in the Hibbert lectures, and inquire how well or how badly they compare with each other.

III. PROBLEMS IN PURE PHILOSOPHY

We enter now upon the third or purely philosophical period in the development of Professor James's thought. In this final period three great problems successively engaged his attention—the problems of philosophical method, of knowledge, and of the ultimate constitution of the universe; and three doctrines were successively propounded in solution of them—Pragmatism, Radical Empiricism, and Pluralism, respectively. Only the first and third of these, however, are of direct interest to us in our present investigation.

Pragmatism

The pragmatic movement in philosophy is a revolt against abstractions and intellectual subtleties in favor of the concrete and practical. It is thus the representative in thought of a general tendency which appears in all departments of life, and as such is a product of a certain temperament which is impatient of technicalities and desirous of reaching the end of any discussion without the trouble of going to the bottom of it. In short it is not really a philosophy at all, but a refusal to philosophize;—not an intellectual doctrine, but a temperament. This pragmatic tendency or attitude expresses itself in the philosophical world primarily as a method, secondly as a theory of truth, and thirdly in its application to certain peculiar problems in metaphysics, religion, and daily life; but we cannot allow ourselves to dwell upon the doctrine here, except so far as it touches upon the religious field.

The principle of the pragmatic *method* is that the complete meaning of all our ideas and beliefs consists in their practical consequences, their effects upon our future experience and conduct; and that if two conceptions do not appear to have different consequences, they are really only two names for the same idea. In applying this method to religious questions, Professor James taught that all abstract theological problems, such as these concerning the self-existence and other attributes of God, are “useless,” because it makes no “practical difference” whether we

assign these attributes to God or not. But to this we must reply with the question, How are we to determine what is or is not useful, or what may or may not have value, at some time or under some conditions of this or some future life? James's assertion of the uselessness of dogmas is itself a dogmatic statement of their permanent uselessness; but we cannot infallibly determine what is or is not practically useful even now, and still less so as to the future. It is a fact, on the other hand, that dogmas are of interest to many persons even now, and it is contrary to the philosophical ideal—certainly to the ideal of this school, which in England usually goes under the name of "Humanism"—to deny or refuse to allow for any genuine human interest.

But that which is most characteristic of pragmatism to-day, and its most significant doctrine from the religious standpoint, is its theory of *truth*, which pragmatists define variously as the useful, the workable, the practicable, the expedient, the satisfactory, the verifiable,—that is to say, generally speaking, in terms of the good. This theory can hardly be said to be in itself either religious or anti-religious, but it does have very decided religious bearings. These, following the criticism of Professor J. B. Pratt,¹ we may discuss under two heads: (1) the general attitude which the pragmatic temperament favors toward religion, and (2) the logical consequences of the doctrine of pragmatism for religion.

Its general attitude, as set forth in the *Will to Believe* essay, is favorable. Where the reason fails to solve the theistic problem, James there teaches, the will and the emotions assert their right to solve it in the direction of religion. As he puts it in his much earlier lecture on *Reflex Action and Theism*, "theism always stands ready with the most practically rational solution it is possible to conceive." Even if materialism and agnosticism should satisfy our intellects, they could never lead anywhere, never touch the emotions or accomplish any practical result. The question between theism and materialism, according to James, is not properly a question of origins—it would make no

¹ See *What is Pragmatism?*

practical difference to-day whether the world was created by God or not—but a question of ends. “The notion of God” has the practical advantage “that it guarantees an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved.” “Materialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the putting off of ultimate hopes; spiritualism means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope.”

Logically, however, as Professor Pratt points out, pragmatism is after all absolutely incompatible with the religious view of the world. It can merely assert that the idea of God is true so far as it is useful, that it is better for us to act as if God exists; but His actual existence is not involved in that determination. Thus the logical outcome of pragmatism when applied to religion is necessarily skepticism. The kind of God in which pragmatism allows us to believe—one that it is expedient for us to believe in—is not the kind of Supreme Being that one could worship and stand in awe of. Rather, we must apply to religious theism, as the pragmatist, if logical, should view it, the expression James was fond of using with reference to the metaphysical Absolute—that belief in God is all very well for a “moral holiday,” but that in our more serious moments we must regard it as quite superfluous.

Radical Empiricism and Pluralism

“Radical Empiricism” is the name given by our philosopher to his theory of knowledge. It can best be defined, I think, for our present purposes, in the language of Professor Dewey, as the doctrine “that things are what they are experienced as”²—that there is no reality beyond the immediately experienced, and if the experiences of two or more experiencers under precisely the same conditions differ, there are then two or more realities, not merely two or more aspects of the same reality. To the transcendentalist, on the contrary, it seems clear that the ultimate reality of things lies beyond the immediate experience—that if experience is to have any *meaning*, it must be conceived as pointing beyond itself to a Reality which is something more than any of our ideas of it.

² See *Journal of Philosophy*, etc., Vol. II, p. 393.

The fact is that radical empiricism, in spite of James's insistence that it is fair to both the unity and the disconnectedness of our experience, is in reality one-sidedly pluralistic in that it regards the parts of the world as primary, and the world itself as merely a gradually unifying aggregate of parts. Immediate experience, it is true, can never take us beyond this pluralistic outlook, for things are always "experienced as" separate—*similar*, sometimes, *connected* in space and time and in various other ways, but never as *meaning* any more than just those connections and similarities;—but for this very reason, if we are to find any significance in the universe, unitary meaning and purpose as well as mechanical interaction, we must transcend immediate experience altogether—inquire not merely into what things are experienced as, but what that experience *implies*.

As to the metaphysical doctrine of pluralism itself, it teaches that the particular things that make up the universe have independent reality, and can neither be traced to a single antecedent source, nor reduced to any mere ultimate unitary reality. God, to the pluralist, if He exists at all, is merely the supreme member of the hierarchy of independent beings, not *the* Supreme and sole original Being—that is to say, He is finite and far from omnipotent. The common dilemma of the problem of evil—that if God is omnipotent He is not good, and if He is good He is not omnipotent—James accepts as valid, and adopts the second alternative as the more religious of the two. Belief in an omnipotent God he holds to be destructive of moral hope. That God should be omniscient, however, he does not regard as impossible, but His fore-knowledge must in no way involve foreordination. God may be like some marvelous chess-player, he suggests, who "cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary may be," and is powerless to direct or interfere with these moves, but knows all the *possible* moves, and "how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory." "The creator's plan of the universe would thus be left blank as to many of its details, but all the possibilities would be marked down."

The God of Pluralism, therefore, is not a theistic but a deistic God, and not in any sense the God of Christianity. God is,

according to the pluralist, a good, faithful, true, and powerful friend, but by no means an *all*-powerful One. He needs our assistance in building up and developing to perfection the universe which He has (it is possible to admit) created, just as much as we need His assistance in the hour of trial and temptation; but the pluralist is unable to accept the Christian idea of an omnipotent Deity who is at the same time infinitely good. Like many so-called "liberal Christian" thinkers of the present day, who refuse to believe what they cannot understand, or cannot inveigle themselves into thinking they understand, the pluralist, since he cannot understand the problem of evil, therefore refuses to acknowledge that there is such a problem, and explains away one horn of the dilemma in order to hold to the other which seems "pragmatically" more valuable to him. Thus pluralism, like pragmatism, is a confession of failure, a decision that if it is difficult to explain any given problem, that problem does not really exist at all—the fact must be accepted as a simple *datum* or "gift," but calls for no explanation. In direct application of the pragmatic method, pluralism is a plank to save from drowning the man who gets beyond his depth in the tumultuous stream of intellectual subtlety. In short, pluralism is no philosophy at all, but a denial of the need of any philosophy. Now it is perfectly true that our ordinary practical decisions are always made according to pragmatic principles: empiricism is quite rightly the characteristic method of the sciences, and their natural viewpoint is pluralistic; but the very purpose of philosophy is to go deeper than either our ordinary knowledge or that of the sciences—to rationalize and intellectualize our various particular experiences in order to discover the unitary ground of them all. In such a search as that, however, pragmatism, empiricism, and pluralism are equally useless.

IV. CONCLUSION

After this survey of the teachings of William James in the various fields of psychology, religion, and philosophy, it is now time for us to attempt to get a general view of his system as a whole, in order that we may arrive at some definite conclusion

as to the religious significance of our author's philosophy—though it must be admitted that that system has not the coherence which will enable us to point out any decided united influence one way or the other.

I have already noted what has always struck me as a serious inconsistency between two phases of Professor James's thought, which I have distinguished respectively as his Gifford philosophy and his Hibbert philosophy. The former shows a decidedly *mystical* trend, the latter is quite *anti-mystical*. Indeed, it would seem that pluralism could have nothing whatever in common with mysticism, and yet one of James's last published articles was entitled almost paradoxically "A Pluralistic Mystic"³—a title which may perhaps be regarded as symbolic of James's life-work in philosophy, with its two distinct phases as persistently maintained side by side but without ever a trace of reconciliation.

The mystical phase or "Gifford philosophy" is that set forth especially in the *Varieties* and *Human Immortality*, and is represented also by his work in the field of psychical research; the non-mystical or pluralistic phase—the "Hibbert philosophy"—is that set forth in the chapter on the self in his *Principles of Psychology*, his *Will to Believe and other Essays*, and his pragmatist and pluralistic books and articles. I stated the former summarily in six propositions, all indicating a belief in a continuous as distinguished from a discrete universe, a universe made out of one "stuff"—"diffuse soul-stuff," as he speculatively calls it—an undifferentiated matrix out of which all individual things proceed. The essence of the Hibbert philosophy might be stated correspondingly in some such fashion as this: (1) the universe is not all of a piece, but a collection of independent beings; (2) these entities had not a common origin, but arose independently, and afterwards entered into relations with one another; (3) things and their relations are data of immediate experience and have no reality beyond that experience as given; (4) God is a finite being, limited in knowledge probably and in power certainly, and we are free coöperators with Him in the building up of the universe.

³ See *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1910.

Perhaps I may seem to be doing Professor James an injustice so sharply to distinguish between these two phases of his thought, but though it is true they overlap to some extent, I think it must be admitted that they *lead*, if logically carried out, in quite opposite directions. And yet, so far as their influence upon religion is concerned, it *would* be unjust to regard the mystical phase as through and through anti-religious. *The Will to Believe* essay was the forerunner of pragmatism, and yet I have called it the most favorably influential work from Professor James's pen. The solution of the apparent contradiction lies in the fact pointed out by Professor Pratt, that whereas the pragmatic *attitude* is favorable to religion, the *logical consequences* of pragmatism are anti-religious—and *The Will to Believe* is a defence of the pragmatic attitude and temperament *against* the claim of logic to universal authority. By this is not meant, of course, that faith—the will to believe—is anti-logical; but that when logic fails, the will to believe has not only the privilege but the right and the duty to settle the question. *The Will to Believe* essay is thus a valuable defence of the faith-attitude, but the later essays and lectures on pragmatism have laid so much stress upon its methodology and its anti-religious doctrine of truth that the valuable work of the earlier essay has been in large measure counteracted.

Pragmatism's distinction between useful and useless knowledge, its doctrine of truth, and the phenomenalism and pluralism to which it logically leads, I should unhesitatingly assert to be destructive of theistic religion. In the essays on *The Will to Believe* and *Reflex Action and Theism* James asserts the claim of the will without denying those of the intellect, but pragmatism in its later developments has become completely *anti-logical*. It denies the existence of any objective and universal standard of truth, of any realities which transcend immediate experience, and of the Infinite God, transcendent as to His Personality but immanent in the universe, which theism acknowledges and worships. It offers us the "momentous option" of believing or disbelieving in God, and tells us that "theism always stands ready with the most practically rational solution" of the problem of the universe "that it is possible to conceive," and yet when we

have made the venture of faith, all that it will grant us is either a powerful but pathetically deficient semi-divine Friend, or also a "moral holiday" to believe in an Infinite God who is merely a temporary and totally unreliable prop to our own weakness. Faith is still, indeed, in these later promulgations of pragmatism, a will to believe, but a will that conveys a warning not to be too sure that *what* we believe has any objective reality.

Nor, on the other hand, is the Gifford phase of James's metaphysic particularly favorable to the claims of religion. I have already tried to indicate the semi-pantheistic tendencies of the Gifford lectures, and pantheism, whether actual or modified, is just as antagonistic to religion as is pluralism—which is deistic or polytheistic—at the other extreme. A mere belief in spirit-communication is not, to my mind, of any real religious significance whatever, but the theory of "diffuse soul-stuff" offered by our author in explanation of such phenomena—a theory which fits in perfectly with the teachings of his Gifford and Ingersoll lectures—is a decidedly pantheistic and anti-religious doctrine.

Professor James was an inspiring and beloved teacher, an interesting and entertaining speaker, a lucid and brilliant writer, a true and loyal friend. *FORCEFULNESS* I should name, I think, as the quality most characteristic of his teaching—but *profundity* could not fairly be attributed to it. Were I to call his favorite doctrines superficial, his followers' most ready and natural response would be to refer that quality to my own capacity of appreciation, but even at the risk of receiving a boomerang blow I shall nevertheless insist upon registering my earnest conviction that superficiality is a quality *characteristic* of the entire mode of thought the best phases of which are associated in the philosophical world to-day with the name of William James. The pragmatic attitude which denies the need of explaining that which baffles explanation, is *not*, whatever its advocates may claim in its favor, a *profound attitude*, nor is it in any sense a philosophical one. That is why I call the pragmatic attitude antagonistic to philosophy but favorable to religion. Religion is a matter of practical life: theology and philosophy are matters of theoretical reflection, and pragmatism refuses to admit that the intellectualization of religious ideas or of ordinary experience has any

warrant or justification. When pragmatism, therefore, neglectful of its own fundamental principle, rationalizes about religion, it ends by denying any objective basis for religion at all: when it holds to its principle and gives the will its due, it ends by supporting religion. What the religious influence of James's thought shall be, therefore, depends entirely upon the point of view from which the individual starts—that is, again, upon the nature and tendency of his own will.

I have said that forcefulness was the most characteristic quality of William James's teaching. Like his own life-long fight against ill-health was the heroism which he preached. Everything that he wrote possessed a virility, carried with it a hatred of sham and pretence and an inspiration to great things, which was thoroughly refreshing, and an inner life-principle which seems to vivify even his most often repeated phrases and turns of thought and make them ever new. One of the last articles that came from his pen—an article which many of us did not read until after his death—had for its purpose the honoring of an obscure writer whose thought seemed to him akin to his own.⁴ It is, I think, singularly striking that this essay should have closed with the following words, so significant in view of what the future was about to bring forth, and at the same time so expressive in large part of the best in his own life and thought:—“Philosophy must pass from words, that reproduce but ancient elements, to life itself, that gives the integrally new. The ‘inexplicable’ . . . remains as something to be met and dealt with by faculties more akin to our activities and heroisms and willingnesses, than to our logical powers. This is the anæsthetic insight according to our author. Let *my* last word, then, speaking in the name of intellectual philosophy, be *his* last words:—‘There is no conclusion. What has concluded that we might conclude in regard to it? There are no fortunes to be told, and there is no advice to be given—Farewell.’”

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⁴ *Op. cit.*